

WHAT IS CLAIMED:

1. Communication apparatus comprising, in combination:

a. a communication device having an external input area into which the user of the device speaks to communicate with the device,

5 b. a sound-absorbing body, and

c. attachment means for mounting said body on said communication device in an operative position in proximity to said input area but without blocking a substantial portion of said input area, said body generally facing the user speaking into the input area to thereby reduce sound emitted to the surrounding environment from such speaking.

10

2. The apparatus of Claim 1 wherein said body is positionable both in an operable position and in a non-operable position.

3. The apparatus of Claim 2 wherein said body is permanently connected to said
15 communication device and is selectively movable by the user between an operable position and a non-operable position.

4. The apparatus of Claim 2 wherein said body is removeably attachable to said communication device in an operative position, and is selectively removable by the user to a
20 non-operative position.

5. The apparatus of Claim 1 wherein said attachment means is a pivoted hinge, and said body is in the form of a generally flat screen movable between a non-operative position which reduces the space occupied by the apparatus and an operative position extending
25 outwardly from said input area.

6. The apparatus of Claim 5 further including a second screen, said screens movable to outwardly extending operative positions at either side of said input area

5 7. The apparatus of Claim 2 wherein said body is in the form of a sleeve slidable between an non-operative generally telescoped over said communication device and an operative position adjacent to said input area.

8. The apparatus of Claim 1 wherein said body extends substantially outwardly of said
10 input area so as to block emanation of sound from the user speaking into said input area.

9. The apparatus of Claim 1 wherein said body is in the form of an arcuate surface extending around but spaced from said input area.

15 10. The apparatus of Claim 1 wherein said body substantially surrounds said input area.

11. The apparatus of Claim 1 wherein said body comprises a rigid or semi-rigid backing that supports a layer of sound-absorbing material.

20 12. The apparatus of Claim 1 wherein said body is comprised of one or more from the following group: cork, rubber, foam, natural or artificial compounds of inert material, and electronic devices that absorb sound.

13. A method of utilizing a communication device so as to reduce the ambient sound
25 produced when the user speaks into the device, said communication device having an input

- 11 -

area into which the user of the device speaks for communicating with the device, said method comprising the steps of:

- a. providing a communication device having an external input area,
- b. providing a sound-absorbing body,
- 5 c. positioning the body in an operative position which is generally facing the user speaking into the input area, is in proximity to the input area, but does not block a substantial portion of the input area, such positioning of the body being for the purpose of allowing speech from the user to freely and directly reach the input area while reducing the peripheral or emanating speech from that speaker reaching the surrounding environment.

10

14. The method of Claim 13 comprising the additional step of selectively positioning the body in a non-operative position when the communication device is not in use to reduce the external envelope of the communication device.

- 15 15. The method of Claim 14 wherein the selectively positioning step comprises removing the body from the communication device.

16. The method of Claim 14 wherein the body is permanently attached to the communication device, and the selectively positioning step comprises moving the attached
20 body.

17. For use with a communication device having an external input area into which the user of the device speaks to communicate with the device, sound-absorbing apparatus comprising:

- 25 a. sound-absorbing screen that includes a rigid or semi-rigid backing panel and a layer

- 12 -

a. sound-absorbing screen that includes a rigid or semi-rigid backing panel and a layer of sound-absorbing material mounted on the backing panel, and

b. attachment means for mounting said sound-absorbing screen on said communication device in an operative position in proximity to said input area but without
5 blocking a substantial portion of said input area, said sound-absorbing material generally facing the user speaking into the input area to thereby reduce sound emitted to the surrounding environment from the such speaking.

18. The apparatus of Claim 17 wherein said attachment means affords movement of said
10 sound-absorbing screen between said operable position and a non-operable position which reduces the space occupied by the communication device and the sound-absorbing apparatus.

19. The apparatus of Claim 17 wherein said screen extends substantially outwardly of said input area so as to block emanation of sound from the user speaking into said input area.

15

20. The apparatus of Claim 17 wherein said sound-absorbing material comprises one or more from the following group: cork, rubber, foam, and natural or artificial compounds of inert material.

20